

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 IO-14 DPW-01 IGA-02 DRC-01 /152 W

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P R 201035Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9564

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 4885

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LA, US

SUBJECT: SOUVANNA'S VIEWS ON PRG, PRESS FREEDOM, EMMET KAY AND OTHER
SUBJECTS

REF: VIENTIANE 4866

1. I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA THIS MORNING,
JUNE 20. I TOLD SOUVANNA I HAD ASKED TO SEE HIM BECAUSE IT
HAD BEEN TWO WEEKS SINCE AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE HAD CALLED
ON HIM AND, AS THE AMBASSADOR WAS LEAVING WASHINGTON THIS
WEEKEND, I WANTED FOR HIS INFORMATION TO REPORT PRIME MIN-
ISTER'S VIEWS ON THE SITUATION IN LAOS WHERE EVENTS MOVED
FAST. I ALSO WANTED TO BRING TO PRIME MINISTER'S ATTENTION
A NUMBER OF ISSUES THAT WERE CAUSING DISQUIET IN WASHINGTON.
THE PRIME MINISTER NODDED AND ASKED WHAT WAS TROUBLING US.
HE SAID NOTHING UNTIL I HAD FINISHED.

2. I SAID THAT OUR POLICY REMAINED STEADFAST. WE
SUPPORTED THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS EFFORTS AT NATIONAL
RECONCILIATION, WE APPLAUDED HIS GOALS AND WE WERE PRE-
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PARED TO WORK WITH ALL HIS MINISTERS AND DO WHAT WE COULD

TO INSURE SUCCESS OF HIS GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, TO DO THIS EFFECTIVELY, A CLIMATE OF CONFIDENCE HAD TO BE CREATED. THERE WERE AT LEAST FOUR MATTERS WHICH CAUSED US CONCERN AND AFFECTED THIS CLIMATE ADVERSELY.

A. SIXTY DAYS AFTER THE FORMATION OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AT LEAST TWO THINGS WERE TO HAPPEN; ONE, THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN TROOPS, AND TWO, A RETURN OF ALL PRISONERS. AS REGARDS THE FIRST, AS HE KNEW FULL WELL, AMERICAN AND THAI MILITARY PERSONNEL HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AGREEMENTS; NVA FORCES HAD NOT AND THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT SOME OF THEM AT LEAST HAD PUT ON PATHET LAO UNIFORMS.

B. AS REGARDS THE SECOND, THERE REMAINED THE ISSUE OF EMMET KAY. ON JULY 4 REPRESENTATIVE MONTGOMERY FROM MISSISSIPPI WAS COMING HERE TO DISCUSS SPECIFICALLY THE QUESTION OF POWS AND MIAS. HE WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF POW/MIA FAMILIES. THIS WAS A SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE EMOTION IN THE UNITED STATES AND WAS AS LONG AS, AT THE VERY LEAST, EMMET KAY WAS NOT RELEASED, IT WOULD CONTINUE TO SOUR OUR RELATIONS. AT THE AMBASSADOR'S DIRECTION WE HAD REVIEWED THE CONVERSATIONS JOHN DEAN HAD HAD LAST YEAR WITH PATHET LAO LEADERS, PHOUMI VONGVICHIT AND SOTH PHETHRASY, REGARDING KAY. A YEAR AGO DEAN HAD BEEN TOLD THAT WE HAD TO WAIT UNTIL THE SIGNATURE OF THE PROTOCOL. ONCE THIS WAS DONE, HE WAS TOLD WE HAD TO WAIT FOR FORMATION OF PGNU. SIXTY DAYS AFTER THIS HAD HAPPENED, AND CONTRARY TO PROVISIONS OF PROTOCOL, PATHET LAO WERE NOW SAYING THAT KAY WOULD NOT BE RELEASED UNTIL LAOS AGREEMENTS HAD BEEN FULLY IMPLEMENTED AND THE AMERICANS HAD REMOVED THEIR BASES FROM THAILAND. ONE COULD ONLY CONCLUDE THAT PATHET LAO HAD ACTED IN THIS MATTER IN BAD FAITH. IN NO CONCEIVABLE WAY COULD HOLDING EMMET KAY BE OF POLITICAL USE FOR MANIFESTLY US WOULD NOT ALTAR FUNDAMENTAL POLICIES FOR HIS SAKE. IT WAS THUS A SIMPLE HUMAN TRAGEDY.

C. THE THIRD POINT OF CONCERN TO WASHINGTON IS THE CONFIDENTIAL

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POSSIBLE RECOGNITION OF THE PRG AND GRUNK BY THE LAO GOVERNMENT. WE HAD NOTED THE DRV NOTE ON THIS SUBJECT AND UNDERSTOOD THAT THE MATTER WAS BEING DEBATED BY PGNU. RECOGNITION OF ONE OR THE OTHER WOULD, IN OUR VIEW, HAVE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS IN MANY AREAS. FIRST, IT WOULD RAISE A SERIOUS ISSUE IN THE UN SYSTEM REGARDING THE MANNER OF REACHING POLITICAL DECISIONS, IF RECOGNITION WERE FOLLOWED BY VOTE ON CREDENTIALS IN INTERNATIONAL

CONFERENCE - LOS IN CARACAS THIS WEEK FOR INSTANCE - WHICH OVERTURNED DECISION REACHED BY UNGA LAST FALL. SECOND, IT WOULD RENDER FINDING A POLITICAL SOLUTION IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA ALL THAT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT. FOR INSTANCE, I ASKED THE PRIME MINISTER, WOULD NOT HIS TASK OF RECONCILIATION HAVE BEEN RENDERED ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE HAD THE PATHET LAO FORMED A GOVERNMENT IN SAM NEUA AND HAD THAT GOVERNMENT RECEIVED INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION? (THE POINT WENT HOME. YES INDEED, HE SAID, IT WOULD HAVE MADE MATTERS MORE DIFFICULT. IN FACT, SOUPHANOUVONG HAD TOLD HIM HE HAD HAD TO RESIST GREAT PRESSURES AGAINST ESTABLISHMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUT HE HAD RESISTED IN ORDER TO AVOID HAVING ANYTHING STAND IN WAY OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION.) FINALLY, I SAID RECOGNITION OF ONE OF THESE MOVEMENTS WOULD RAISE A REAL QUESTION WITH REGARD TO THE VALIDITY OF PGNU'S NEUTRALITY SINCE NO GOVERNMENT IN ASIA, EXCEPT COMMUNIST COUNTRIES AND NO TRULY NEUTRAL GOVERNMENT ANYWHERE, RECOGNIZED THESE MOVEMENTS. (I DID NOT INITIALLY MENTION THE EFFECT THIS MIGHT HAVE ON CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS AID BECAUSE THE IMPLICATION OF THIS POINT HAS ALWAYS DEEPLY IRRITATED SOUVANNA.)

D. FINALLY, I SAID WE HAD NOTED CHAPTER 6 OF THE REGULATIONS ON DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS WHICH HAD BEEN SUBMITTED BY THE POLITICAL COUNCIL TO THE CABINET AND WHICH APPEARED TO PROVIDE A BASIS FOR FUTURE PRESS CENSORSHIP. WE HAD ALSO BEEN ADVISED BY INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISTS AND BY LAO FRIENDS THAT THERE WAS AN EFFORT WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION TO INSTITUTE SUCH CENSORSHIP. I WANTED TO MENTION THIS MATTER TO HIM BECAUSE OBVIOUSLY ANY CENSORSHIP WOULD RECEIVE WIDE-SPREAD PUBLICITY. I UNDERSTOOD THAT A REPORT HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE TO CONFIDENTIAL

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THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS INSTITUTE ON THIS SUBJECT. ANY CENSORSHIP COULD ONLY CAST A SHADOW ON THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF NEUTRALITY.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, IMMEDIATELY BRIDLED AT THE LAST POINT. HE SAID THAT THIS WAS A RUMOR SPREAD BY THE THAIS. THERE HAD BEEN ARTICLE TO THAT EFFECT IN BANGKOK PRESS. IT WAS HOWEVER WITHOUT FOUNDATION. THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION COULD NOT INSTITUTE ANY CENSORSHIP WITHOUT CABINET APPROVAL. I TOLD HIM THAT THE INFORMATION I HAD RECEIVED DID NOT COME FROM ANY THAI SOURCES BUT FROM LAO FRIENDS AND AMERICAN NEWSPAPERMEN. HE RETORTED THAT IF JOURNALISTS BEGAN TO SPREAD THIS RUMOR HE WOULD SIMPLY REFUSE TO SEE THEM. (MY IMPRESSION IS THAT THIS IS A NEW ISSUE

FOR HIM WITH WHICH HE HAS NOT YET GRAPPLED AND WHICH
TROUBLES HIS IDEA OF A HARMONIOUS GOVERNMENT.)

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 4885

4. WITH REGARD TO RECOGNITION OF PRG AND GRUNK, HE
SAID THAT THIS WAS A VERY DELICATE PROBLEM FOR THE
CABINET. THE PATHET LAO HAD ON THEIR OWN RECOGNIZED
BOTH, AND THE VIENTIANE SIDE (HE SAID "WE") FIRMLY
REFUSED SUCH RECOGNITION. THERE IS THEREFORE A BASIC
CLASH OF PRINCIPLE. FURTHERMORE THE DRV AND PRG HAVE
BEEN VERY ACTIVE. THO (?), MADAME BINH AND PRESIDENT
THAT HAVE SENT NOTES TO THE KING, PHOUMI AND HIMSELF,
AND THE PATHET LAO ARE PRESSING VERY HARD ON THIS ISSUE.
HE WAS THINKING OF A COMPROMISE. PERHAPS HE MIGHT ASK
THE VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIANS TO REDUCE LEVEL OF THEIR
REPRESENTATION IN VIENTIANE ("METTRE LEURS AMBASSADES
EN VEILLEUSE"). IN RESPONSE TO MY SPECIFIC QUESTION HE
CONFIRMED HE WAS THINKING OF ASKING THE TWO AMBASSADORS TO
WITHDRAW AND LEAVE THE EMBASSIES IN THE HANDS OF CHARGES.
I POINTED OUT THAT THERE WAS A MATERIAL DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN TWO MOVEMENTS WHICH COULD IN NO WAY QUALIFY AS
GOVERNMENTS, AND TWO GOVERNMENTS THAT MET ALL CRITERIA
BY WHICH GOVERNMENTS ARE INTERNATIONALLY RECONGIZED.

FURTHERMORE, THE PATHET LAO WAS ALSO A MOVEMENT AND
THEIR RECOGNITION OF THE PRG AND GRUNK COULD BE CON-
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SIDERED MOVEMENT TO MOVEMENT RELATIONSHIPS WITHOUT ANY
IMPLICATION OF DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION. (QUITE CLEARLY
HE IS CONFRONTED BY A BASIC ISSUE THAT IS SPLITTING
HIS CABINET AND IS LOOKING FOR A COMPROMISE WHICH IN
THIS CASE IS NOT READILY APPARENT.

5. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT AT YESTERDAY'S CABINET
MEETING HE HAD DIRECTED PHOUMI TO ANSWER THE DRV NOTE
COMPLAINING OF AMERICAN BASES IN THAILAND BY REAFFIRM-
MING THE WILL OF LAOS TO DEFEND ITS NEUTRALITY AGAINST
ALL OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE AND TO PROHIBIT THE USE OF
ITS SOIL BY ANY COUNTRY AGAINST ANOTHER.

6. WITH REGARD TO KAY, HE SAID THAT HE WOULD DISCUSS
THE MATTER AGAIN WITH PHOUMI AND SOUPHANNAVONG AND
TRY "TO GET HIM RELEASED." (I FOUND HIS TONE OF VOICE
AND CHOICE OF WORDS ENCOURAGING. FOR ONCE HE APPEARED
WILLING TO TAKE UP THIS SAD PROBLEM AS AN ADVOCATE.)

7. WITH REGARD TO PATHET LAO PROPAGANDA AND THEIR
ACCUSATIONS OF CONTINUING PRESENCE OF AMERICAN MILITARY
PERSONNEL IN LAOS, HE SAID THAT WE HAD TO BE UNDER-
STANDING. AFTER ALL, PATHET LAO HAD BEEN THROWN IN
JAIL IN THE PAST AND NATURALLY THEY WERE FULL OF SUSPI-
CION. IT WOULD TAKE SOME TIME BEFORE A CLIMATE OF
CONFIDENCE COULD BE CREATED. I SAID THAT I FULLY
RECOGNIZED THE PATHET LAO PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCERNS AND
THAT WE WERE PREPARED TO DO WHATEVER PRIME MINISTER
FELT WOULD BE USEFUL TO DISPELL PATHAT LAO FEARS.
FOR INSTANCE, WHAT WOULD SATISFY THE PATHET LAO THAT
INDEED THERE WERE NO AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL LEFT
IN LAOS? WE WERE ALSO PREPARED TO WORK WITH THE PATHET
LAO MINISTERS CONSTRUCTIVELY. TWO DAYS AGO USAID DIRECTOR
MANN AND I HAD WHAT WE THOUGHT WAS A VERY FRUITFUL
MEETING WITH THE (PATHET LAO) MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS
SINGKAPPO SIKOTCHOUNNAMALY. WE REASSURED HIM ON A
NUMBER OF POINTS ABOUT WHICH HE HAD BEEN CONCERNED.
(REPORTED SEPARATELY.) WE FELT THAT ENERGIES AND TIME
SPENT ON FALSE ACCUSATIONS AND INFLAMMATORY PROPAGANDA
COULD BE BETTER USED IN THE TASK OF RECONCILIATION AND
RECONSTRUCTION. HE EVIDENTLY TOOK THE POINT BECAUSE
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HE COMMENTED THAT AT THE CABINET MEETING SINGAPORE HAD REPORTED AT LENGTH ON OUR CONVERSATION AND HAD EXPRESSED HIS COMPLETE SATISFACTION WITH IT.

8. FINALLY, I ASKED PRIME MINISTER WHETHER THERE WAS ANY MESSAGE HE WANTED TO TRANSMIT TO AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE. PRINCIPALLY, HE SAID, HE HOPED THAT CONGRESS IN VOTING AID WOULD RECOGNIZE THAT LAOS WAS A SPECIAL CASE AND WOULD NOT ATTACH TOO GREAT IMPORTANCE TO PATHET LAO PROPAGANDA. I SAID I COULD ASSURE HIM THAT INDEED LAOS WAS CONSIDERED A SPECIAL CASE SINCE IN THE TRAGIC PENINSULA OF INDOCHINA, LAOS ALONE HAD ACHIEVED A STABLE CEASE-FIRE. ONE REASON THE AMBASSADOR HAD GONE BACK WAS TO BE IN WASHINGTON AT THIS VERY TIME WHEN THE EXECUTIVE PRESENTED ITS REQUEST FOR FOREIGN AID TO THE CONGRESS. SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD LEAD OFF THE PRESENTATION WITH GREAT VIGOR AND IN IT HAD INCLUDED THE REQUEST FOR LAOS. HOWEVER, PRIME MINISTER HAD TO UNDERSTAND THAT AID WAS UNDER INCREASING CRITICISM, ECONOMIC SITUATION IN US WAS DIFFICULT AND THERE WAS PARTICULAR CRITICISM OF AID TO INDOCHINA. THE POINTS I HAD RAISED WITH HIM WERE ALSO RELEVANT TO THIS DEBATE.

9. HE ENDED CONVERSATION BY SAYING HE WOULD BE GOING TO LUANG PRABANG THIS WEEK TO SEE THE KING AND SOUPHANNAVONG AND WOULD BE DISCUSSING THESE VARIOUS MATTERS WITH THEM. HE THEN MENTIONED THAT HE WOULD ALSO DISCUSS THE DISSOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHICH ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION WOULD REQUIRE NATIONAL ELECTIONS WITHIN THREE MONTHS. IN RESPONSE TO MY SURPRISED QUESTION, HE SAID HE DID BELIEVE THAT ELECTIONS COULD TAKE PLACE THIS YEAR. (THIS IS FIRST TIME ANY OF US HAS HEARD OF POSSIBILITY OF ELECTIONS THIS YEAR. HIS ANSWER WAS VINTAGE SOUVANNA IN TERMS OF OVER-LOOKING ALL THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED.)
CHAPMAN

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